

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, September 20, 2000, at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the U.S. Navy. A list of action items resulting from this meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purposes of the meeting were to update committee members on progress made by the Appendix A subcommittee on revising the basic assessor training materials and to discuss assessor consistency issues.*

INTRODUCTION

The committee was joined by invited guests Dr. Kenneth Jackson of the New York State Department of Health and Dr. Margo Hunt of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), representing the Appendix A subcommittee chaired by Dr. Jackson. Mr. Ingersoll called the meeting to order, reviewed the agenda, and called on Dr. Jackson to make his subcommittee report.

APPENDIX A (BASIC TRAINING) SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Dr. Jackson explained to the committee that he had attended the East Coast offering of the pilot assessor training course presented earlier in the year. Although the basic content of the course was acceptable, Dr. Jackson thought the course manual was too prescriptive and severely hampered the instructors. Consequently, he volunteered to chair a subcommittee to rewrite the training manual. Dr. Jackson and Dr. Hunt met via teleconference shortly after NELAC VI. They agreed that Dr. Jackson would draft an outline of how he perceives the first five introductory training units should be incorporated into a manual. Dr. Jackson reported that he would be sending this outline to Dr. Hunt on September 20 for her feedback. If his approach is acceptable to Dr. Hunt, then he will proceed with the remainder of the training units.

After moderate discussion to clarify the subcommittee's charge and the On-site Assessment Committee's time line expectations, it was ascertained that Dr. Jackson's vision and the On-site Assessment Committee's vision are compatible. It was agreed that the subcommittee's initial work product will be an outline. The outline can be used to rewrite the training manual and to write a training standard, which will constitute Appendix A to Chapter 3. Dr. Jackson likened the standard, which will contain the essential elements that must be included in the training course, to the course curriculum. He likened the more detailed manual to the course textbook. Dr. Jackson expressed his willingness to assist the committee with the writing of the standard and manual. He indicated that the subcommittee can produce a draft outline by the Sixth NELAC Interim Meeting (6I), but noted that the draft outline may not have been reviewed by all members of the subcommittee at that time.

ASSESSOR CONSISTENCY ISSUES

The committee briefed Dr. Jackson on what they perceive to have been a heated issue of discussion outside of official NELAC and Accrediting Authority (AA) Workgroup meetings. They noted that rumors have circulated that National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) laboratory assessments performed to date have not been consistent with the NELAC Standards and have not been consistent between assessors. Committee members expressed the belief that assessor/assessment consistency is a make-or-break issue for NELAC. Previous approaches taken to ensure consistency (i.e. prescriptive, standardized assessor checklists and one standard assessor training course) have been impossible to maintain. The committee suggested that NELAC needs a mechanism for dealing with the issue and solicited Dr. Jackson's input.

Dr. Jackson noted that every assessment is different but acknowledged that NELAC should strive for as much consistency as possible. To that end, his department's eight assessors are working on a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for assessments. In addition, all assessors are accompanied on an assessment at least once a year by a peer. Dr. Jackson indicated that he would be happy to share his department's SOP with the committee.

In subsequent discussion, the committee identified two issues — consistency between assessors in the same program and consistency between programs. There was considerable discussion of the need for an SOP for assessments and of whether such an SOP or its essential elements should be included in Chapter 3 of the NELAC Standards. It was also suggested that there may be some confusion as to what is required in Chapter 3 and that the committee should reexamine the chapter to make sure that there is no ambiguity. There was extensive discussion of the assessment appraisal form required by Section 3.5.2.j. It was suggested that the section is vague and that some AAs are not aware that such an appraisal form is required. Committee members suggested several options to assure that any problems with assessment consistency could be clearly identified, which might require subsequent changes to Chapter 3.

Although the committee reached no resolution on assessor/assessment consistency, there was spirited discussion of the issue. Mr. Ingersoll thanked all participants for their input and tabled the issue for continued discussion in a future meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. Jack Hall asked that committee members review the latest versions of Appendices B-1 and B-2, which he had distributed prior to the meeting, for discussion at the committee's next meeting. He also suggested that committee members read a national laboratory accreditation article contained in the August 2000 issue of *American Laboratory*. The article addresses small laboratory issues and references NELAC.

Mr. Charles Dyer notified the committee that he will be away from his office for approximately two weeks and that committee members may communicate with him via his home e-mail address.

CONCLUSION

As the meeting drew to a close, Mr. Ingersoll requested a final roll call and thanked Dr. Jackson and Dr. Hunt for their input. The meeting was adjourned as the allotted time for the teleconference expired at 2:30 p.m. EDT. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for October 4, 2000, via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
1.	Appendix A subcommittee, chaired by Dr. Jackson, will prepare draft outline (essential elements) for presentation to stakeholders.	K. Jackson	NELAC VII
2.	Dr. Jackson will provide NY State Dept of Health SOP for assessments to On-site Assessment Committee.	K. Jackson	Upon completion of SOP
3.	Committee will include Appendices B-1 and B-2 as issues for discussion at future meeting.	All	10/4/00

PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2000

Name	Affiliation	Phone/Fax/E-mail
Ingersoll, William Chair	US Navy	T: 843-764-7337 F: 843-764-7360 E: IngersollWS@navsea.navy.mil
Buhl, Rosanna	Battelle Duxbury Operations	T: 781-952-5309 F: 781-934-2124 E: buhl@battelle.org
Dyer, Charles	NH Dept of Environmental Services	T: 603-271-2991 F: 603-271-2867 E: c_dyer@des.state.nh.us
Friedman, David (absent)	USEPA	T: 202-564-6662 F: 202-565-2432 E: friedman.david@epa.gov
Hall, Jack	Interpretive Consulting	T: 865-576-4138 F: E: scl3883@aol.com
Moore, Marlene (absent)	Advanced Systems, Inc.	T: 302-834-9796 F: 302-995-1086 E: mmoore@advancedsys.com
Sheibley, Richard	PA Dept of Env Protection	T: 717-787-4669 F: 717-783-1502 E: sheibley.richard@dep.state.pa.us
Sotomayor, Alfredo	WI Dept of Natural Resources	T: 608-226-9257 F: 608-267-5231 E: sotoma@dnr.state.wi.us
Uhlfelder, Mimi	Severn Trent Laboratories (STL Baltimore)	T: 410-771-4920 F: 410-771-4407 E: muhlfelder@stl-inc.com
Urrea, Santos (absent)	City of Austin	T: 512-927-4027 F: 512-927-4038 E: santos.urra@ci.austin.tx.us
Jackson, Kenneth (invited guest)	NY State Dept of Health	T: 518-485-5570 F: 519-485-5568 E: jackson@wadsworth.org
Hunt, Margo (invited guest)	USEPA/ORD/QAD	T: 202-564-6457 F: 202-565-2441 E: hunt.margo@epamail.epa.gov
Greene, Lisa (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: 919-541-7483 F: 919-541-7386 E: lcg@rti.org